DAGHESTAN PRAYER SAFF CA 1875

RUGS OF THE CAUCASUS

FEBRUARY 1–APRIL 11, 1988
SWEETBRIAR COLLEGE
ART GALLERY

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Rugs of the Caucasus

from the

Collection of

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Mark Keshishian

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Foreword

The colorful array of antique Oriental carpets comprising the exhibition of "Rugs from the Caucasus" is truly a wonderful experience for the layman as well as the seasoned connoisseur. It was as a layman that I first met Harold and Melissa Keshishian across the museum shop counter of The Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. It was my first volunteer position in a museum and my introduction to a trustee and his wife who were, and are, so thoroughly supportive of the organization's educational programs. Both contribute invaluable time and enthusiasm to the museum's popular Saturday series, "Rug Appreciation Morning." At these times, the public is encouraged to bring their own treasured textiles and rugs to the museum and glean further information from experts like Harold and Melissa.

An internationally recognized connoisseur and collector of antique rugs and textiles, Harold Keshishian serves on the board of trustees of The Textile Museum which houses the foremost collection of Islamic textiles in the Western hemisphere. In addition to his responsibilities as trustee, Harold has conducted a month-long seminar on rugs and kelims of the Transcaucasus. Lecture topics have included Turkish village rugs and the art of collecting antique Islamic and Chinese textiles. For The Arts Club of Washington, he has organized exhibitions of rugs of the Caucasus and animal trappings of the Near and Middle East.

Melissa McGee Keshishian is a 1971 graduate of Sweet Briar College with a B.A. in American Studies. A well-known conservator of rugs and textiles, she was formerly curator of the Wickham-Valentine House in Richmond, Virginia. Active in the equestrian program while at Sweet Briar, Melissa continues to pursue her interest in riding on the Keshishians' farm in Poolesville, Maryland, as well as participating in Washington area hunts.

Melissa is very active in Sweet Briar College's development efforts. A member of the 1986 Reunion Gift Committee, she currently serves as fund agent for her class. During the search for period furnishings for Sweet Briar House, Melissa and Harold contributed a Persian carpet which now graces the Anne Gary Pannell guest room.

For seven years at The Textile Museum and now at Sweet Briar, I continue to be duly impressed with the generosity of the Keshishians in making exhibitions of splendid 19th-century rugs available to the museum-going public. Loans from the Keshishian Collection have been included in the exhibitions and publications of such prestigious institutions as the Kimbell Art Museum, National Geographic Society, Joslyn Art Museum, The Textile Museum and the National Gallery of Art in London. Sweet Briar is very fortunate to join these ranks with the exhibition "Rugs of the Caucasus."

Harold and his staff made a special trip to Sweet Briar to deliver the rugs, design and install the exhibition. He and Melissa have spent untold hours checking and double checking the text of the catalogue, which they have published to accompany this show. We gratefully acknowledge every one of those hours as well as the support of the Near Eastern Art Research Center that has made this exhibition and its catalogue possible.

Carma C. Fauntleroy
Director of College Galleries
Sweet Briar College

Stewardship:

The Making of a Collector

There are three essential elements of collecting: search and seizure, organization and documentation, and stewardship. The first two form the base; the third, that vital apex which gives definition and substance to the whole. The process involved is a difficult and demanding one, and it does not happen overnight. But to those who are willing to persevere, it promises the high road to an almost never-ending triangle of adventure, excitement, and discovery.

Harold Mark Keshishian's evolutionary journey began over half a century ago when a loving father bestowed upon his youngest son what he perceived as one of life's greatest gifts, an Oriental rug. It was a moment the boy would always treasure, and it marked the beginning of what has become one of the most creative and productive careers enjoyed by an American collector of Islamic carpets.

In 1953, Phase One began in earnest with the first "hard cash" acquisition. Over the next ten years there would be many, many more, bought at random whenever and wherever funds were available and opportunity presented itself. The publication of Ulrich Schurmann's landmark Caucasian Rugs (1964) provided the inspiration for Phase Two and initiated the first steps toward organization of an already extensive collection.

This period culminated three years later at the Washington Arts Club with an exhibition of rugs from the Caucasus organized, curated, and catalogued by Harold Keshishian. Thus began the third and final phase of all for any collector, that of stewardship. For two full decades this has involved more exhibitions, numerous published articles, a publishing enterprise, and trusteeships with the Near Eastern Art Research Center and The Textile Museum.

The exhibition at the Sweet Briar College Art Gallery constitutes yet another significant benchmark in this collector's long and successful pursuit of stewardship. There are thirty-one Caucasian carpets drawn from the Keshishian Collection dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Each piece has been carefully chosen by the collector, himself, to demonstrate the beauty and diversity of material produced during that period in that area. But equally important, he selected these pieces because they represent examples of carpets which can still be found outside museums, continue to be used in American homes, and to a limited degree remain available in the marketplace.

This show, therefore, is far more than just a beautiful display of one form of Islamic art. It represents what stewardship and collecting are all about. And best of all, it is a happy reminder from our benefactor that the making of a collector may have only just begun!

William Russell Pickering
President
Near Eastern Art Research Center

Rugs of the Caucasus

What a world of color, design and imagination! No other area of the rug-weaving world offers such a wide scope of variety as the Caucasus. No other area in the world of comparable size has so many distinctive groups, customs and languages. Nor is there another area that has served as often as a crossroads for so many different conquering armies, all leaving some trace of their customs in the various peoples of this region. These facts enable us to appreciate why Caucasian rugs today enjoy a greater popularity than ever in America. They have long enjoyed this distinction in Europe -- a fact borne out by the many European rug dealers who come to America seeking these rugs because many of the best Caucasian rugs were imported to the United States in the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century.

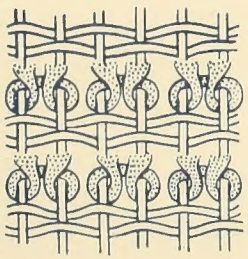
The rugs of the Caucasus are woven in an area spanning from the Sea of Azov on the Black Sea eastward to the Caspian Sea, the entire country being straddled by the high-peaked Caucasian mountain range. This mountain range is over 900 miles long, varying in width from 35 to145 miles, rising to 17,000 feet in altitude and peppered with many valleys. The people of the Caucasus are, in many ways, more interesting than their rugs. Today, three republics of the Soviet Union comprise most of the area: Georgian S.S.R., Armenian S.S.R., and Azerbaijan S.S.R. A small southern portion of this area is Persia. Unbelievably, there are more languages and dialects spoken in this area of the Caucasus than in any other place in the world of comparable size, numbering 300 in all. This is a result of the rugged terrain of the Caucasus and the fact that the population was inhibited from traveling by a lack of natural passes, as well as the many invasions by different peoples.

The history of this area is as varied as its languages. The earliest settlements were by Greek maritime communities on the southeastern shores of the Black Sea. For the next two thousand years, the most powerful state in the Caucasus was Georgia. The southern portion of the Caucasus fell under the sway of the Armenians after the first century. Subsequently, the Caucasus was invaded, occupied, and settled by many peoples: notably, the Khazars, Huns,

Mongols, Seljuks, Ottomans, and Persians. Russian aggression began early in the 18th century and all appreciable resistance was stifled by 1864. Today the Caucasus plays a decisive role in the Russian economy owing to its wealth of minerals: oil, manganese, zinc, barite, andesite, gold, silver, copper, and other rare metals. The best known oil field and the largest oil refineries lie in the southern Caucasus on the Caspian Sea. This oil is shipped to all parts of the Soviet Union and throughout eastern Europe and the Far East. Although these people have felt the dominance of many foreign powers, and for the last 200 years Russian dominance, they are essentially independent and are the most nationalistic of all Russian republics.

It may be worthwhile to point out that any attempt to give certain Caucasian rugs legitimate names is indeed difficult and often impossible. The ornamentation which is normally peculiar to the rugs of one area is sometimes found in the rugs of another. For instance, the field design of a Dagestan may be found in a Shirvan. This may have been caused by intermarriage, traveling, displacement of tribes or by outright copying. Many rugs have just been dubbed Caucasian because of the many characteristics of a rug which are peculiar to two or three locales.

In identifying rugs of this region, much may be learned from the materials in the make-up of the rug and the way in which they are used. One consistency found in all Caucasian rugs is the fact that the Turkish knot is used.



Turkish Knot

The Turkish knot, which is also known as the Ghiordes knot, consists of a loop passing around and behind two warp threads leaving the free ends of the loop to emerge between the two warp threads. The two ends of the warp threads form the pile or face of the rug.

The material used for the warp and weft, with very few exceptions, is wool. In general, the wool of the Caucasus is of a fine quality, due to the fact that the country varies in elevation from 6,000 to 18,000 feet. Sheep and goats raised at a higher elevation grow a thick coat of fine wool to keep them warm. Those raised at a much lower level do not produce as heavy an undercoat resulting in wool of a lesser quality. Since much natural wool is used in Caucasian rugs, we

often find as many as three different natural colors in one rug: black, brown, and white. The fact that these people kept flocks whose coats varied from black to white can be seen in the fringes of many of these rugs.

The weft threads are often dyed; in certain rugs such as the Talish, they may be blue, and in Kazaks, red. In general, the weft consists of two threads between each row of knots; however, in the Gendje as many as eight rows of wefts are used between rows of knots. The warp threads running from end to end of the rug are often looped at the end. In some cases they are braided, plait-like, parallel to the end of the carpet. In other cases the warp end is cut resulting in fringes at both ends of the rug. Characteristic of many Dagestans is the multitude of knots in a lozenge pattern into which the fringes have been woven. This is one of the most beautiful ways of securing the ends of Caucasian rugs. Existing examples of this type of fringe are rare because the fringe is exposed and more susceptible to wear than any other part of a rug. The edges of the rugs are generally wool, but in many fine Shirvans and Dagestans, white cotton is occasionally used.

Design is perhaps the most important means of identification of the Caucasian rug. As in most rugs, ornamentation is a schematization of certain symbols. More interesting in Caucasian rugs are the depictions of birds, horses, peacocks, flowers, carnations, tulips, roses, pomegranates, lotus, representations of hands, shears, prayer houses and Cufic writing. Some Caucasian symbols appear to be a corruption of Chinese characters. The Chinese influence in Caucasian rugs appears to be strong, possibly due to the influx of the Mongul hordes and the westward travel of the Turanian peoples of the Eastern area.

A few rugs have human-like representations without the head. These may be identified with the Mohammedans who do not believe in any configuration of human-like characters. On the other hand, their output of prayer rugs was colossal. Other rugs with cross-like ornamentation, cruciferous flowers, and representations of animals and humans were woven by the Christian Armenians and Georgians.

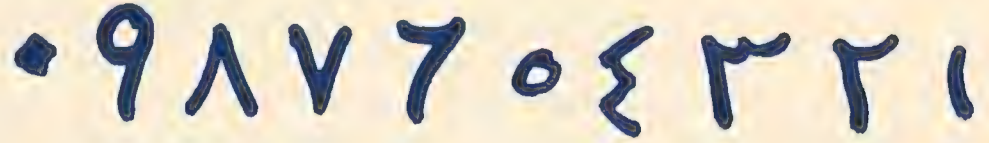
One of the most interesting rugs woven by the Mohammedans of the Caucasus was the Gendje with an enclosing mihrab (inverted V- or U- shaped niche toward one end and peculiar only to prayer rugs) straddled on each side by a hand. Interesting borders found in the Caucasus are the Cufic, Chichi, and Zeichor. The Zeichor border is often referred to as the running-dog border. The Cufic border is a corruption of old Cufic writing and is probably the most beautiful border found in Caucasian rugs. It appears in Kuba and Chichi rugs.

During the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-96), the Caucasus fell completely under the sway of the Russian Empire. It is interesting to note that the Russian court was influenced by the fashionable French court. This, in turn, was revealed in rugs ordered by the Russian officers stationed in the Caucasus. The designs of these rugs were requested to be woven in French styles of the period as seen in rugs from the Karabagh district which suddenly showed rose and bouquet designs. Another very important design of the Caucasus is the Eagle Kazak, sometimes called the Adler Kazak. Upon close inspection, this design reminds one of a pseudo-Russian imperial coat of arms. However, in general, Caucasian rugs have strong geometrical, angular designs.

An interesting facet of Caucasian rugs is the date which is woven into their colorful designs. More so than in any other type of rug, especially Persian and Turkish, the greatest frequency of dating is found in Caucasian rugs. Dating of these pieces has been attributed to many different explanations, the most popular being that they were woven for a special occasion such as a wedding, anniversary or birthday. Later these dates were often copied from another rug which was used as a pattern. In some bizarre cases, the rug to be copied was turned face down (it is easier to copy a rug from the back side) and due to the ignorance of the weaver, the date was copied backwards. In certain instances, rugs which appear relatively new have an older date, and this supports the theory that these pieces were copied.

The Arabic numbers represent the Mohammedan year which dates from the time of the Hegira, July 622, when Mohammed fled from Mecca to Medina to escape persecution. The lunar, not the solar, year is used in Moslem chronology and the Mohammedan or lunar year gains about one year in every 33-7/10 solar years. The following formula is probably the best way to arrive at the Christian year from the Arabic number. For instance, assuming that the rug reads 1275, divide 1275 by 33-7/10. The result, 37, should be subtracted from 1275, giving 1238. Add 622 to 1238 to calculate the Christian year 1860.

Arabic Numerals



0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Apart from comparison of dated pieces to undated pieces, another avenue to dating rugs is the decomposition and decay of colors. White natural wool, which was often used, tends to fade in time and, to the professional eye, some idea of the age can be gained from the extent of this fading. The acid dyes, brown and black, often lead to deterioration of the wool after a period of time. Fading of colors comes with time and the practiced eye can estimate the age of the rug in question with a degree of consistency.

One of the most important features of Caucasian rugs is the coloring, because colors, in conjunction with the design, are the features which give these rugs the highest desirability to the rug connoisseur. Most of the rugs of the Caucasus were dyed with vegetable dyes when commercial dyes were not available. Due to the inaccessibility of many parts of the Caucasus, where roads were so rugged (and still are today) and solid, two-wheeled, ox-drawn carts were the only transports, the weaver had to rely on his own homemade vegetable dyes. With the coming of Russian influence, however, the weaver began relying on commercial products.

The following is a list of some of the sources of vegetable dyes. Note that the bases for all dyes are not vegetable, but also animal and mineral.

brown	walnut husk, oak bark, weld
black	indigo, iron sulfate
green	indigo, weld
yellow	pomegranate rind, saffron
red	madder, cochineal
orange	vine leaves, madder
white	natural wool or bleached wool
blue	indigo

These dyes were used in many different combinations to suit the needs of the dyer and the weaver. In many cases, the dyer took previously dyed wool and re-dyed it to acquire a desired color, not realizing that this effect was only temporary. In time, it would cause a very noticeable change in color.

Looking at a rug, one may notice that a red field consists of several variegated shades. This change of tone adds to the beauty and desirability of the rug. The variegation or change in color is called "abrash" and is often caused by one dye lot of wool being used up and the next dye lot being comparatively over- or under-dyed. If the wool of one dye lot was spun tighter than the previous lot, the two lots may not accept the dye in the same fashion. Different dye lots whose colors have faded in time are still wedded harmoniously together to give more beauty than the weaver or dyer had ever predicted.

Some rugs from the Caucasus can be identified by their colors. For example, the Karabagh has a Chianti purple as a field color which is seen in no other type of rug. Zeichors distinctively incorporate a blue in the running-dog borders and a green as a field color.

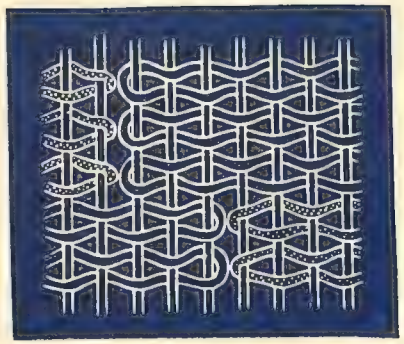
While older Kuba and dragon rugs reached proportions of 10' x 20', Caucasian rugs of the 18th and 19th century were never what one would call room size, but rather "scatter" size. There are many reasons why the output of this area favored smaller rugs. Most rugs of the Caucasus were originally made for household use or local sale. The size of the loom could only be as large as the home would accommodate. The loom never reached large proportions and very few rugs of this period were ever larger than 6' x 9'. There were very few rug-weaving centers in the Caucasus that actually had looms made for making rugs.

Another interesting reason for the lack of larger rugs is the fact that the Caucasus never had large courts or palaces (such as the Turks and Persians) which would require rugs. Nor did the Caucasus ever possess the wealth to sustain such activity. The area was never free from war or pillage for any appreciable length of time nor enjoyed any lengthy period of peace or independence from its warring neighbors. The fact that the Caucasian rug is usually of a scatter size in no way detracts from its desirability. On the contrary, it has enhanced its market value because today's collector is more prone to select smaller pieces.

All of the above factors --- weft, warp, knot, size, color, fineness of wool, etc. -- give basis to one of the most important facets of wool identification, namely "handle." No matter how much one has learned about rugs through study and observation, the actual touch and feel of a rug tells much to the rug expert. Handle is easily spoken of, but the ability to compare only comes through the actual experience of handling thousands of rugs over a period of many years. For instance, the Kazak and Karabagh, comparatively speaking, have a thicker, heavier weave than other rugs of this area. The pile is generally higher and shaggier. The Dagestan and Shirvan are usually woven with finer wool, a lower pile, and a higher number of knots per square inch. The Gendje generally has a medium-high pile with more lines of wefting than any other rugs of this area. Loosely woven Derbent rugs with pale field colors are generally the least marketable of the Caucasus. Kubas have a low pile and a medium tone field. Talish have a medium weave and a medium-high pile. Lesghi are tightly woven with a medium-high pile.

Kelim Weave

Flat-stitch rugs as well as knitted rugs are woven in the Caucasus. The Kelim that is made in the Caucasus is similar to the Kelim made in Persia and Anatolia. It is most often produced in the Shirvan, Karabagh, and Kazak districts but may well have been woven anywhere throughout the Caucasus. The Kelim that is woven in the Caucasus is called a Palas. A colored thread that is used in the design is drawn once over and once under a warp thread in such a manner that the Kelim may be used on both sides. The ends of the wool are wedded together so that no unusual knots or disturbances appear on the face of the rug. To exaggerate the design of the rug, a slit is often left where one color ends and another begins.



Soumac Weave

The Soumac is woven in a fashion where the design emerges from a colored thread passed over several warp threads and then drawn to the reverse side. As the rug progresses and the thread ends, the loose thread is left to hang out of the reverse side or is cut on the reverse side if more color is needed. Soumacs, also known by the name of Shemeka, are generally attributed to the Shirvan province. Some Soumacs are woven as fine or finer than the best European tapestries. The Soumac is woven so that only one side may be used since the unfinished threads are hanging out of the reverse side. The English and French gave them the name cashmere because their initial appearance with dangling threads was reminiscent of the shawls made in the valley of Kashmir in India.

Two other types of rugs from the Caucasus are Siles and Vernehs. They are woven in the manner of a tapestry but enjoy an embossed ornamentation. The Siles have the figure "S" which is thought to be a corruption of an early dragon design. Generally, these carpets are woven in two pieces and wedded together after completion, but it is not unusual to find a large carpet woven as one piece. The distinctive patterns of Siles and Vernehs include squares, lozenges or various animals and birds worked into the rug.

One of the most interesting facets of rug weaving is the method in which the design is actually incorporated by the weaver into the rug. During the 18th and 19th centuries, many rugs in other parts of the world were woven with what may be considered an actual set of blueprints. However, the design of a Caucasian rug is in the weaver's head or, as mentioned before, copied from existing rugs in the home. The fact that Caucasian rugs were woven without a so-called blueprint contributed to the geometric character of their designs. This feature is even more obvious in Turkoman rugs where the same method of memory weaving is used. Notwithstanding, some rugs from the Karabagh and Derbent districts have curved lines and rose bouquets which were copies of French designs.

The rugs of this time were woven in the home and usually by the women and children of the house. The men clipped the sheep and goats and helped with the dyeing. The women cleaned, carded, and spun the wool. Quite frequently, the rug that was on the loom had more than one weaver. Generally, two persons produced a similar weave; however, if one weaver either tied his knots tighter or pulled his weft line tighter, the finished rug would have ripples or curve to one side. If some strands of wool in the warp were spun tighter than others, they would shrink more than the others when cleaned and produce the familiar ripple in the rug.

An interesting and frequently asked question is, "How long does it take to weave it?" The length of time taken to weave a rug is directly proportional to its size, the fineness of the wool, and the number of knots per square inch. Generally speaking, a 3' x 5' Caucasian rug of 100 knots per square inch woven by one weaver at a single sitting may take anywhere from three to five months.

Harold Mark Keshishian
Washington, D.C.

The Caucasus

The information accompanying each Caucasian rug in the exhibition checklist offers detailed information regarding its origin, materials, and symbolic patterns.

Oriental rugs are classified by the region in which they were produced. For example, many of the rugs in this checklist are identified "Shirvan." Those were woven in the Shirvan area of the Caucasus.

The following definitions apply to the terms used in the checklist descriptions.

Abrash: Variations in color tones as a result using of wools from different dye lots.

Cufic: Type of Arabic writing.

Field: Large central portion of a rug inside the encircling border patterns.

Kelim: Flat-woven, pileless rug.

Mihrab: Dome-shaped portal design symbolic of the entrance to the mosque. The inverted U- or V-shaped device is pointed toward Mecca during prayer.

Pile: A velvet-like surface composed of the cut and sheared ends (or loops) of yarns which form the rug knots.

Prayer rug: Identified by the *mihrab* design. Moslems, who pray five times each day while facing Mecca, must kneel on ground upon which no non-believer has walked. Prayer rugs are symbolic of this sacred ground.

Warp: Yarns extended lengthwise on a loom. They are intersected at right angles by the weft yarns. In pile rugs, knots are wrapped around the warp yarns in the tying process. The ends of the warp yarns comprise the fringe of a rug.

Weft: Yarns running crosswise and interlacing the warp at right angles.

Nature is the source of the extensive symbolism incorporated in Oriental rug designs. The following is a key to a few of the symbols frequently woven into Caucasian rugs.

Cloudband	Deity
Eagle	Light; height
Flying eagle	Good luck
Lily	Purity
Lotus	Sun; creation; resurrection
Peacock	Fire; light
Rosettes	Motif of the Lotus
Running dogs	Fame; ever-increasing honor
Serpent	Life; immortality
Stars	Divinity
Sun	Light
Tree of Life	Knowledge; truth

1. **Chichi, Shirvan**
Late 19th century, 3' x 5'

The slanting bands alternating with rosettes make up the classic Chichi border of this rug. The pattern of stepped polygons is the most frequently found field design in Chichi rugs.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

2. **Karabagh**
Circa 1875, 4'11" x 7'6"

Always referred to as an Eagle Kazak, this particular design is in fact a Karabagh. Commonly described as "sunbursts," the large medallions have been considered a corruption of the old imperial czarist coat of arms.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

3. **Kuba, North Shirvan**
Circa 1840, 4'6" x 12'6"

A highly stylized lily, the Avshan, and polychrome rosettes comprise the field design of this rug, referred to as a Kuba. Consistently, this design is wed to the Cufic border, one of the most sophisticated drawings in Caucasian art.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

4. **Kazak**
Dated 1884, 3'8" x 8'5"

The large geometric lozenges with latch hooks form an ascending design on a medium blue field. The field contains the fanciful drawing found in the Kazak area. The main border has a serrated, stylized form of the carnation leaf.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

5. **Kuba**
Circa 1880, 3'6" x 5'6"

The sophisticated honeycomb device in ivory and encompassing the dark ground of the field is known as a Konagkend. This rug displays a well-drawn Cufic border.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

6. **Kazak**
Circa 1880, 3'10" x 7'6"

The warm red ground of this Kazak is decorated with six stylized trees. Additional embellishment consists of camels, roosters, and flora scattered on the field in an ascending design. This example is known as the "tree of life" pattern.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

7. **Shirvan**
Circa 1875, 4' x 4'8"

The pale gold diamond medallion on a medium red field is a very rare color and drawing among Shirvan area examples. The main border is a well-drawn Cufic pattern.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

8. **Shirvan**
Dated 1894, 3'10" x 5'4"

The five polychrome, cruciform devices are known as Lesghi stars. This rug is dated in the field: 1894. The Cufic border appears on a rare, pale green ground.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Cotton	Edge:	Wool (originally cotton)

9. **Karabagh**
Dated 1900, 4'3" x 8'6"

The four polychrome medallions are called Lesghi stars. This example of a Karabagh has an attractive abrash, a blending of different shades of color that results from using wools dyed in different lots. The date 1900 was woven twice; once upside-down.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

10. **Karabagh**
Circa 1850, 4' x 4'11"

The purple pile throughout the central medallion and the border is silk, a material rarely found in Caucasian rugs. The large rose is considered to be evidence of the Russian-French influence in the Caucasus.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Silk, wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

11. **Kazak**
Circa 1880, 3'8" x 4'5"

This example is a prayer rug with a "head-and-shoulder" design sitting directly on top of the *mihrab*. The border consists of the popular Caucasian calyx-and-leaf pattern.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

12. **Kuba, North Shirvan**
Circa 1890, 6'3" x 8'3"

Similar to other North Shirvan examples in the exhibition, this rug is in an excellent state of preservation. Its dominant features, the Avshan lily and Cufic border, are readily distinguished by a white coloring against a dark blue ground.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

13. **Karabagh**
Circa 1800, 4'10" x 7'

The field of this prayer rug is filled with Arabic calligraphy and its mirror image. The text is that of a daily prayer. The colors, border, and spandrel drawings make a unique weaving.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

14. **Dagestan**
Circa 1895, 3' x 4'8"

Only recently have scholars been able to identify this particular weaving as an Avar from Dagestan. This rug is the only known example to have a red ground while all other identified Avar pile rugs have blue grounds.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

15. **Sile, South Caucasus**
Circa 1850, 6'2" x 8'3"

The large S-shaped devices are interpreted as dragons with feet or serpents with double-beaked heads. A tail or legs are at the bottoms of the "S". Siles are usually woven in two halves and then pieced together. Occasionally they are woven as a single rug.

Warp:	Wool		Flat-woven
Weft:	Wool, cotton	Edge:	Wool

16. **Alpan, Kuba**
Circa 1850, 2'2" x 3'

This fragment of an Alpan rug is the most colorful of all the weavings in the exhibition. As a rule, Alpan rugs possess better quality and weave than most Caucasian rugs. The scholar Ulrich Schurmann noted that the diagonal bars represent lobsters.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

17. **Gendje**
Dated 1879, 3'3" x 5'

The dramatic design on this prayer rug is especially interesting because of the hooked fingernails of the stylized hands placed to either side of the *mihrab*. The diagonal lines are typical of the Gendje area. The cochineal red border is often associated with the Karabagh region, indicative of its proximity to Gendje.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

18. **Bidjov, Shirvan**
Circa 1850, 2'6" x 2'7"

The light blue Bidjov pattern is a laterally extruded form of a lotus blossom. The small format of this rug is very rare for this region.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Cotton	Edge:	Cotton

19. **Verneh Fragment, Southern Caucasus**
Circa 1850, 6'7" x 3'

Vernehs are flat-woven rugs usually produced in the southern Caucasus. The design is a result of a supplementary weft applied to the plain ground. In this example, the camels of the vertical border are Bactrian (double-humped) as opposed to the dromedary (singled-humped) camels.

Warp:	Wool		Flat-woven
Weft:	Wool, cotton (white)	Edge:	Wool

20. **Dagestan**
Circa 1850, 7'10" x 7'10"

The three-part layout of this rug is referred to as a triconium. The small square of the central panel is reserved as the seat of the Shah, while his advisors are seated to his left and right on the long outside panels. The rectangular portion of the central panel is the path of the petitioner who approaches the Shah. An unusual aspect of this rug is the combination of flat weaving in the petitioner's section and three pile areas for seating.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Flatwoven:	Wool, cotton
		Edge:	Wool

21. **Akstafa, Shirvan**
Circa 1850, 3'2" x 6'

Akstafa rugs are known for their stylized peacock-like birds. Above the peacocks' backs in this example are fanciful animals resembling dragon-horses.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Cotton	Edge:	Cotton (originally)

22. **Gendje**
Circa 1875, 3'3" x 4'

The highly stylized hands and a head-and-shoulder design on this prayer rug are drawn below the blunted *mihrab*. Although a great variety of symbols were produced in the Caucasus, the combination of so many different ones in a single rug is rare.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

23. **Karabagh**
Dated 1902, 4'5" x 12'7"

This striking pattern is referred to as a Cloudband Karabagh. Of all rugs in the Caucasus, more of this type of Karabagh are found with inscriptions and dates than any other group.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

24. **Dagestan**
Circa 1880, 4'3" x 9'10"

Multiple-niche rugs, or saffs, from the Caucasus are extremely uncommon. In addition to its format, the rug's rarity is enhanced by the positioning of stylized hands on each side of the five *mihrabs*.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

25. **Shirvan**
Circa 1890, 6' x 4'

Rugs from the Shirvan area have traditionally exhibited the finest weaving and highest knot count of all Caucasian production. The central medallion of this example is an elongated head-and-shoulder design usually found in prayer rugs.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Cotton	Edge:	Cotton

26. **Shirvan**
Dated 1872, 4'4" x 3'6"

This prayer rug possesses an exceptionally fine weave with excellent wool. The ends were finished in a Soumac technique attesting to the high quality of this rug.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Cotton	Edge:	Wool (originally cotton)

27. **Shirvan**
Circa 1850, 4'2" x 9'4"

A great variety of animals and other objects grace the field of this rug: peacocks, checkerboards, Bactrian camels, gazelles, coffee urns, as well as humans. The detail in the costumes of the people is unusually sophisticated.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Cotton	Edge:	Wool (originally cotton)

28. **Karabagh**
Circa 1850, 4' x 7'3"

The distinctive palette and design in this rug readily identifies it as a Karabagh. Scattered throughout the pattern are six pairs of eagles.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

29. **Moghan**
Circa 1890, 3'4" x 7'6"

This rug is a typical example of production from the Moghan area with its lustrous wool, stepped and paired polygons and large flower heads on a cream-colored border.

Warp:	Wool	Pile:	Wool
Weft:	Wool	Edge:	Wool

30. **Armenian Altar Cloth**
Circa 1825, 2'2" x 3'9"

This small altar cloth has five crosses of Jerusalem in the center. Viewed compositely, they appear as a single, large cross. The small embroidered rosettes and colors indicate a weaving of the Derbent area.

Silk embroidery on cotton muslin
Edge: Silk

31. **Shirvan**
Circa 1880, 5'3" x 9'2"

The pattern of this slit-weave Kelim rug includes heraldic palmettes on a navy blue field. Most Kelims have small slits throughout the surface as a result of two weft lines that were returned at adjacent warp lines.

Warp:	Wool		Flat-woven
Weft:	Wool, cotton	Edge:	Wool